

The Olympics and Success: A Model for Achieving Goals

Seana Moss

INTRODUCTION

Upon walking into my reading classroom at Marshall Middle School in Houston, Texas, one might hear a conversation similar to the one below. It doesn't matter what grade the students are in or whether they are male or female. At some point this year, they've all had a conversation like this:

“Did you watch that game last night?”

“Which one?”

“Duh, who else would you have watched but the Rockets!!!”

“Oh. Yeah, I caught the last half of the game.”

“So you saw that amazing shot that was made by Michael Jordan. It is so cool how he can just dunk the ball like that. I bet that he never even thought about what he was doing as he sunk it. The ball just floated from his hands and straight into the basket.”

“That shot was pretty cool. It's just too bad that Jordan doesn't play for our team!”

“Heaven knows the Rockets need all the help they can get now that Olajawon isn't here. Talk about a stupid thing to do!”

“Yeah, I totally agree, but enough about that. What about all the free throws that Steve Frances made. You would think that the Wizards would learn to stop fouling him so that he wouldn't have this opportunity. The Wizards would have won the damn game if it wasn't for the free throws Frances shot in the final seconds of the game.”

“I'm glad we won last night, but I'm worried about the game tomorrow against the Lakers. They'll probably lose that one.”

“Well, even if they lose they don't really lose. Think of all the money those players make! All they have to do is shoot a ball through a hoop. Talk about an easy job. Some players don't even play all season; they just sit on the bench and watch their teammates, and they make more money than my parents make in three years. They probably only have to show up on the day of their games and get to party the rest of the time.”

“Yeah, I totally agree. I wish I could have that job instead of being stuck in this stupid school. When am I ever going to really have to use this stuff anyway? I just want to do enough so that I can pass TAAS and go to the next grade. Why should I waste my time when adults never have to work as hard?”

“Yeah, man. Life is so easy, and success is something easily gained. I just hope that the right person will discover me even though I’m not half as good as the players in the NBA.”

Needless to say, the latter part of the conversation concerns me. My students feel that life is just something that is given to them. They were all born with a certain lot in life—in the case of my pupils, this is being poor and a minority (Hispanic)—and they think there is nothing that they can do to change it. It doesn’t matter how much knowledge they gain or how hard they work. They believe they are stuck with what they were born with and that nothing can change it.

In order for my students to achieve, they must first learn what it means to be successful. Most of them will never play in the NBA or on any other professional team. However, they can realize that with hard work and perseverance that they can achieve success in their lives. The purpose of my curriculum unit will be to help my students realize their own definition of the word *success* and that it is something they can achieve in their lives, just like the sports stars they admire so much.

DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

Merriam-Webster defines *success* as “the gaining of wealth and fame.” This definition is extremely well known to my pupils. They know and see in their daily lives people who have more than met this definition. They watch television and see rock stars, politicians, movie stars, and television personalities and observe people who seem to have everything. They can even go out to the wealthy parts of town and see the beautiful houses, automobiles, jewelry, and clothes that other people can afford. Because of their lack of material goods, they deem themselves as not successful. They feel that all these other people have something that has eluded them. Some begin to believe that they will never rise above their circumstances and give up even trying to achieve more from life. Others turn to illegal behaviors, such as dealing drugs, in an attempt to gain wealth and fame. Their attitude is that they might not be successful at any particular skill (sports, music, acting, academics) but that they can at least have the trappings of one who has achieved much in life.

Merriam-Webster, however, also defines *success* as the “satisfactory completion of something.” As a teacher, I believe that this definition is the most beneficial to my students. Many of them are never going to achieve the “success” that people in the entertainment arena achieve. However, they can learn that doing little tasks well will make them successful. If they do a lot of little tasks well, they will perhaps feel more

confident in trying larger and more time-consuming projects. When they have success here, their ability levels will grow and perhaps even some of the negative labels that have been attached to them can disappear because there will be no need for them. I feel that all of my students, whether they publicly admit it or not, want to do well in school. The problem is that many of them don't know how. They all came with certain obstacles that have kept them from experiencing the achievements of their peers. Many of my students are identified as special education or LEP (Limited English Proficient). They read on average about two grade levels below where they should be; for example, several of my sixth grade students read at about a fourth grade level. Because of their problems in reading, all of their academic subjects are affected. After all, if they have difficulty reading a textbook written at their grade level, how are they going to be successful in reading word problems in math, about the Revolutionary War in American history, or the solar system in science? On the other hand, if they can gain confidence in this one subject and all the individual skills involved, then they will see their scores in other subjects increase. This will definitely make them more successful and might also lead to lots of the other success that they all crave when they see someone who has more than they do.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE

Now that I have explained the definition of *success* that I will use in classroom, it is important to define the characteristics of what makes or helps an individual to become this way. Stephen R. Covey in his immensely popular book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, explains seven habits that effective people perform in order to achieve what they want out of life. For the purpose of my class, I will focus on the first four habits—being proactive, beginning with the end in mind, thinking of winning, and putting first things first. My belief is that my students will experience a great sense of accomplishment in their lives if they will do these four things. To me this is what each of these steps will mean to them.

Being Proactive

Being proactive will require my students to anticipate future problems or obstacles that might thwart their efforts. Many of my students don't even take this first step because they are very good at coming up with a million different reasons why they can't do something. Some of them will say things like, "I'm Hispanic. Hispanics just don't read very well." Others say, "Reading has always been hard for me and probably always will be. There is no point in even trying." Realizing that setbacks are a natural occurrence and one of the many steps involved in overall success is definitely something that my students need to learn.

Beginning with the End in Mind

Another habit, beginning with the end in mind, is also very important for my students. Many of them are stuck in the poverty cycle, and they don't see any way out of it. They

think that because of the circumstances they find themselves in now that they are destined to experience that same condition forever. They haven't learned the value of setting goals and working hard to achieve them. Because they don't do this, they don't take the step of thinking where they would like to be tomorrow, a year from now, or five years down the road. They have dreams like others of what life could be like, but they don't seriously think about what they really want and how they are going to achieve it. Instead they just make decisions at random and hope that everything will work out in the end.

Thinking about Winning

Related to the second habit above is the next habit, thinking about winning. My students are very good at this habit. They always make comments to me about what life is like for the rich and famous. Unfortunately, many of my students have never experienced a winning moment that comes after lots of hard work. They say things like, "I'm going to hit eight out of ten free throws" or "I'm going to get at least ten points every game this season." They dream about being able to do these tasks, but they never imagine themselves working to actually accomplishing them. Other people can do these skills effortlessly but "never me" is a very common attitude among many of my pupils.

Putting First Things First

Finally, my students need to realize the value of putting first things first. They start off with big desires like anyone else, but they fail to understand that accomplishing something huge in life is usually made up of many smaller goals that have to be met in order for the big one to be achieved. For example, many people at the beginning of a new year make the common resolution to lose weight. For most individuals, this resolution becomes nothing more than a dream because this huge goal is never broken down. In order to lose weight, several factors or steps must be taken into account including eating the correct foods, exercising, and controlling the amount of food eaten if one is to experience a sense of accomplishment. My students don't break down their huge goals this way. They see the end result of what are really years of hard work, dedication, and sacrifice and think that some people are just destined to be luckier than others because they don't have to "work" for what happens to them. It is true that everyone is born with a unique set of talents and special abilities and that this starting place is different for many of us. Besides learning to break down their goals into their individual components, they also need to realize that their starting point is going to be different than someone else's and that nothing can be done to change this. If two people want to lose weight but one person has ten pounds to lose and the other one hundred, it is clear that these two individuals might have the same goal but that the latter will have to work for a longer period to gain the same result as the former. Students need to realize that everyone starts off at different places in life; however, anything is achievable if they are willing to work and not compare themselves to others. Success is something that is achieved within oneself, so my students are only competing against themselves when it comes to setting their goals.

WHY SPORTS???

Sports as an Autotelic Activity

After doing a little reading on the subject of why people play sports, I have come to the conclusion that most people participate in sports because it is something they enjoy. It is true that people play sports to win prizes or to show their superiority over others. After all, if people only played because it was something they enjoyed, countless professional sports organizations, such as the NBA and NFL, would not exist, and young children would not dream of playing in them. However, according to Allen Guttmann, the author of *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (1978), play is autotelic and pleasure comes from achieving what has not yet been accomplished (3). Because sports is a form of play for most individuals, it is natural to assume that sports is also an autotelic activity. Most of my students play sports for this reason. When they are running around the basketball court, they are concerned about being on the winning team; however, more importantly, they want to make the most three-point shots and a couple of awesome slam dunks.

The Olympic Ideal

Every couple of years, many people all over the world watch the Olympic games in summer or winter. Many are enthralled by the athletes' dedication and hard work to perfect their craft. They don't seem to be concerned with money or fame but simply want to be the person who was the best in the world at a particular sport at one time. No other place is this attitude perhaps more prevalent than in the Olympics. People train for many years in their sport in hopes of one day winning an Olympic gold medal. This Olympic definition of success has pretty much existed since the beginning of the earliest games in ancient Greece. According to the website Edgate.com, the earliest games started as a religious festival for Greeks to offer sacrifices to deities. As the games were introduced, these became another way for Greeks to show their love and honor to Zeus, the principal Greek god (1). Guttmann adds more details when he explains in depth about Greek religion and the sports festivals that were held to honor the gods. The Olympics were just one of four festivals. They were held every four years in Olympia and were founded in 776. Other festivals included the Pythian games, the Isthmian games, and the Nemean games. These festivals also honored different deities including Apollo and Poseidon. Each festival was represented by a branch or wreath that was given as an award to the winners. Olympic participants were competing for nothing more than an olive branch (21). Guttmann also emphasizes the religious rather than competitive nature of the games. Each day of the games a particular religious event occurred. For example, the funeral rites of Pelops (at whose grave Herakles inaugurated the games) were celebrated on the second day of the games and a sacrifice to Zeus, in whose honor the games were for, occurred on the third day. The fifth and final day of the games, was devoted purely for

religious purposes. On this day a vast feast was held to thank the gods for their sponsorship of the games and the wreaths were presented to the winners (22).

Because the games began as a way to honor deity, individual accomplishments often took a second seat. Spectators from other countries were astonished that competitors were interested in doing their best, not for themselves, but for deity. Doing one's best was a way to honor and please the gods. An Internet article titled "Excellence and the Competitive Spirit" (2002) discusses a Persian military officer, Tigranes, who was astonished when he watched an ancient Olympic competition. He was amazed that to honor Zeus, the competitors worked very hard and wanted simply to do the best they could do (1). They didn't seem to be so concerned with what might come after the competition in terms of rewards, but they wanted to win for their own personal fulfillment. Tigranes remarked to a Greek official, Mardionius, "what kind of men are these that you have pitted us against? It is not for money they contended but for the glory of achievement" (1). He was impressed that the athletes were not competing for money or fame but simply for the glory of having achieved something truly extraordinary.

Unlike many of our modern professional sports (baseball, basketball, hockey, and football) where many play for money, fame, or a combination of the two, the early Olympic games consisted of individual competitions that related to a Greek idea called *arête* or excellence. Even though there were team events in the ancient games, this same attitude is still true of most modern Olympians from all over the world. Perhaps the theme of the most recent winter games in Salt Lake City, "light the light within," shows this same attitude. This theme, like its ancient Greek counterpart, portrays the attitude of striving for individual excellence. Being the best that you can be is what I wish for my students to achieve.

Final Decision

As I was deciding the most effective means to teach my students to make goals and become successful by accomplishing them, I reflected on this Olympic ideal described above. After lots of consideration and taking into account my students' needs and talents, I decided that designing this theme around Olympic sport stars would be the most effective way for me to get my message across. By studying various stars from a variety of sports, students will begin to realize the difficult time that these athletes have had in perfecting their craft. Perhaps no other means would have so distinctly integrated the goals for this unit as this will.

For my purpose, we will focus on three Olympic athletes and one coach. These athletes were chosen because they each exemplify at least one of the characteristics of a successful person as described above. After studying a brief autobiography by each of these individuals, students should come to an understanding that success is not something that is achieved overnight but is in fact something that must be worked at with a fierce determination. In addition to this, I wanted to pick athletes who reside in the Houston

area that my students have probably heard of. I also wanted athletes from all walks of life. Finally, it was important for me to choose Olympic athletes because many of these people did not get involved in their sport because of the monetary success it would bring but because of other personal goals they had. All these factors led me to choose the following individuals for my students to read about: Bela Karolyi, the famous gymnastics coach from Romania who helped lead several athletes to their Olympic dreams; Mary Lou Retton, one of Karolyi's pupils who went on to win the all-around gold medal in gymnastics at the 1984 Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles; Steven Lopez, the gold medal taekwondo winner in the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia; and Laura Wilkinson, the gold medal diving champion also in the 2000 Summer Olympics.

Bela Karolyi

This amazing women's gymnastics coach was chosen because of his long-term success in his discipline. He is often regarded as one of the best coaches in the world because of the many athletes that he led to Olympic and world success. Some of his most famous athletes include Nadia Comaneci, Mary Lou Retton, Julianne McNamara, Kim Zmeskal, Kerri Strug, and Dominique Moceanu. Many of my students also feel that immigrants, like many of them, are not capable of contributing much to American society. I want my students to learn about Karolyi's many accomplishments in gymnastics and how his contributions have affected an entire sport. According to the website USA-gymnastics.org, Karolyi led several American teams to world and Olympic glory. The most notable achievement is probably the team gold medal that his team won in the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta (Schaller, 1). By learning about Karolyi, my students will see how he had to struggle for many years in his native Romania and in the United States before he achieved the monetary success that they think just came his way by luck.

Mary Lou Retton

This athlete was chosen because she was the first American woman to win a gold medal in her chosen sport. This accomplishment was even more remarkable because she had badly injured her knees a few months before the competition and had to rush through her rehabilitation in order to compete in the games. Her determination to achieve her goals led her to victory, even when she wasn't a favorite for the gold medal. Her life will help my students see that overcoming obstacles and other people's opinions is possible if we're determined to achieve what we wish in life.

Laura Wilkinson

She was chosen because of the example that she sets for others to follow. When she was younger, one of her best friends on her diving team died in a car accident. Having to go through this experience made her more determined to do the best that she could do, not just for herself but also for her deceased friend. She also has a big concern about what

children think of her. As a result, she tries to live the best way she can and set a good example for those watching her. I want my students to learn through her that goals can be accomplished even when we have traumatic experiences, such as the death of a loved one. Many of my students have lost people in their lives, including both of their parents. I wish for them to learn not to use this as an excuse for the rest of their life but to try even harder than they might have otherwise to achieve what they desire.

Steven Lopez

Finally, this athlete was chosen for many different reasons. Steven's sport is taekwondo, and he takes the reader through his journey to become an Olympic medallist in the 2000 Summer Olympics and the disappointment of not being able to compete four year earlier in Atlanta. He emphasizes looking at the big picture and the difference between what makes a winner and winning, an important distinction for my students to understand because they need to know that they will not always win in life but that they can always be winners. He stresses the importance of education and how it has made him a better athlete. He also speaks very favorably about his older brother and taekwondo coach. I want my students to be able to focus on the people in their lives who are truly important to them and help them make good choices, and I believe Lopez's example is a good one. Another reason to study this athlete is his ethnic background. My school is made up of a largely Hispanic population, and I believe it is important for them to know about a great athlete from their own cultural background.

SUCCESS FOR ALL (SFA) READING PROGRAM

Background

I teach reading to students who are struggling with the subject. One class in particular is made up of mostly sixth and seventh graders who are reading at least two grade levels below where they should ideally be. There are of course many different reasons for this. Several of them have immigrated to the United States within the last two or three years, and this is the first year they have spent outside an ESL (English as a Second Language) classroom. Several others have been in special education classes, and they are also for the first time being served in regular education. Some are not just ESL or special education students but are both. They struggle with learning another language and have learning disabilities that make these problems even more profound.

I have seen this year that just because a student is moved out of an ESL or special education environment does not mean that he or she is ready to move on to a regular classroom where sometimes no attention is given to these children's special needs. ESL students in particular still need lots of help in developing their vocabulary. They come to me being able to speak and listen to English very well, but gaining a grasp of the academic language they must have in order to succeed in school is much more difficult and takes more time to achieve. Working on vocabulary development and the syntax of

English is very important for these students. Leaving ESL classes does not mean that students have mastered everything as far as the language goes; it simply means that these students have mastered enough English to make them ready to learn in a mainstream environment.

The big struggle with my special education students is testing their reading knowledge in a format that is comfortable for them. I have found that many of these students are quite intelligent but that they simply cannot perform on standard measures of testing academic performance like paper and pencil tests. They might have writing problems and so they can't write the answers; however, if the same questions are asked to them orally, they get almost all of them correct. This is especially true of higher level questions on Bloom's taxonomy (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation problems). Other students are dyslexic and have great difficulty reading. Coming up with alternative means of assessment is essential to see if these students truly understand what they are reading or if they are still clueless about the meaning behind the words on the page.

Both groups have a strong need for structure in their lives. Many of my students come from single parent homes or homes where they are responsible for raising younger brothers and sisters. School is often the least of these children's concerns. They often leave school and don't know what to expect for the rest of the day. They might have a place to go to, but there are no parents or adults there to watch them. They might not have simple basics that many people take for granted like food, water, and electricity, never mind a television or telephone. They might go home to find that their house has been broken into or that one of their parents is in jail. With all of these outside concerns that they are dealing with daily, it amazes me that many of my students want to succeed at school. Because of their lifestyle, however, they are not used to having structure in their lives. They are used to coming to school and having it be the unpredictable mess that is common in their home life. Giving these children structure and predictability in their life, even if it is only for ninety minutes a day, is one of the most important things that I can give them while they are in my classroom. Even if I teach them nothing else, my room can be a refuge from the outside world and all its concerns.

Structure

The Success for All (SFA) reading program has greatly benefited my students this year. There are many reasons for this success, which I will briefly highlight before I explain the program more specifically. I will be one of the first people to admit that I was skeptical of using this approach for reading. I am more of a traditionalist when it comes to teaching. I thought that the best way to improve reading skills is the best way to do almost anything else—practice, practice, and then practice some more. I did know though that I would have to use this approach because my school mandated it for all students reading below a sixth grade level. After working with the program, I noticed huge gains in my students' grades. After only two months of working with the program, many of them went up at least two grades from the period before the program was implemented.

Besides their class grades improving, their overall reading ability on standardized reading tests also improved at least one grade level in about four months. Teachers are always looking for ways to reach underachieving students. SFA has given me better results than I ever imagined, and I believe that the content I have chosen and this program together will make a great unit for my students.

SFA is a tightly structured program that integrates many skills. It provides lots of variety, which is great for students who are easily bored. The pace in an SFA class is very fast because the class is doing something different every few minutes. It also involves them in discussions with other teachers and students as well as giving them opportunities to prove what they individually know. It also emphasizes other important reading skills such as prereading, making predictions, and providing evidence for answers. Students also develop their oral reading and listening skills with other students and the instructor. Even though SFA offers all of these benefits, the one that is the most important to me is the vocabulary development that my students receive. They add words to both their active vocabulary (the words they use) and their passive vocabulary (the words they recognize). Below is how the SFA program is outlined for a typical school week including the time that is spent in a class period on each task.

Day One

- I. Listening Comprehension (20 mins.)
- II. Reading Together (55 mins.)
 - A. Teacher Directed Lesson
 - i. Story Motivation
 - ii. Introduce Vocabulary
 1. Pronunciations and Choral Response
 2. Word Meanings
 3. Teacher Meaningful Sentences
 - iii. Story Introduction
 1. Predictions with Evidence
 - B. Team Practice
 - i. Silent Reading – Section I
 - ii. Partner Reading – Section I
 - iii. Treasure Hunt – Section I
 1. Partner Discussion
 2. Individually Written Responses
- III. Two-Minute Edit
- IV. Book Club or Additional Skills Practice (15 mins.)

Day Two

- I. Listening Comprehension (20 mins.)
- II. Reading Together (55 mins.)
 - A. Teacher Directed Lesson
 - i. Review Vocabulary

- 1. Rapid Review and Choral Response
 - 2. Review Word Meanings
 - 3. Meaningful Sentences
 - ii. Discuss Story
 - 1. Share Predictions with Evidence
 - 2. Use Treasure Hunt as a Guide
- B. Team Practice
 - i. Silent Reading – Section II
 - ii. Partner Reading – Section II
 - iii. Treasure Hunt – Section II
 - 1. Partner Discussion
 - 2. Individually Written Responses
 - iv. Student Meaningful Sentences
 - v. Words Out Loud Practice
- III. Two-Minute Edit
- IV. Sustained Silent Reading or Additional Skills (15 mins.)

Day Three

- I. Listening Comprehension (20 mins.)
- II. Reading Together (55 mins.)
 - A. Teacher Directed Lesson
 - i. Review Vocabulary
 - 1. Rapid Review/Word Meanings
 - 2. Share and Revise Teacher Meaningful Sentences
 - ii. Discuss Story
 - iii. Explain Adventures in Writing
 - B. Team Practice
 - i. Complete Story-Related Activities
 - ii. Student Meaningful Sentences: Continue/Check/Revise
 - iii. Partner Planning for Adventures in Writing
 - C. Peer Pre-Assessment
 - i. Words Out Loud
 - ii. Meaningful Sentences
 - D. Assessment
 - i. Words Out Loud Test
- III. Two-Minute Edit
- IV. Sustained Silent Reading or Additional Skills (15 mins.)

Day Four

- I. Listening Comprehension (20 mins.)
- II. Reading Together (55 mins.)
 - A. Teacher Directed Lesson
 - i. Reading Comprehension Lesson
 - 1. Direct Instruction

- 2. Guided Practice
 - ii. Adventures in Writing
 - B. Team Practice
 - i. Reading Comprehension Lesson
 - 1. Team Consensus
 - 2. Individual Practice
 - ii. Adventures in Writing
 - C. Peer Pre-Assessment
 - i. Story Retell
 - D. Assessment
 - i. Story Test
- III. Two-Minute Edit
- IV. Sustained Silent Reading or Additional Skills (15 mins.)

Day Five

- I. Listening Comprehension (20 mins.)
- II. Reading Together (55 mins.)
 - A. Teacher Directed Lesson
 - i. Reading Comprehension Lesson
 - 1. Review Reading Comprehension Lesson
 - ii. Adventures in Writing
 - B. Team Practice
 - i. Reading Comprehension Lesson
 - 1. Complete Individual Practice/Check
 - 2. Reflect and Connect
 - 3. Additional Practice
 - ii. Adventures in Writing
 - 1. Revise
 - 2. Share
 - iii. Extension/Enrichment Activities
 - C. Assessment
 - i. Reading Comprehension Test
 - ii. Meaningful Sentence Test
- III. Two-Minute Edit
- IV. Book Club (15 mins.)

Using the above construction, a week's worth of materials that will be used in my class while I am teaching this sports autobiographies unit follows below. In addition to these materials, I have decided that my students will choose one more athlete from a list that I will give them. For a final project grade, they will have to design a poster that will also be described in further detail below.

LESSON PLANS

Steven Lopez

From *The Olympic Dream and Spirit Volume One* pp. 185-89

Vocabulary

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1. taekwondo | a Korean martial art resembling karate |
| 2. Korea | a peninsula in Asia, west of Japan occupied by North Korea and South Korea |
| 3. accomplishment* | an acquired excellence or skill |
| 4. hobby | a pursuit or interest engaged in for relaxation |
| 5. elite* | a superior group |
| 6. tournament | a championship series of games or athletic contests |
| 7. international | a group having people from at least two different countries |
| 8. mentor* | a counselor or guide |
| 9. demonstrate* | to show publicly |
| 10. national | a group made up of people from one country |
| 11. ambassador | a country's representative to another country |
| 12. passionate | enthusiastic |
| 13. fatigue | tiredness |
| 14. atrophy | decrease in size |
| 15. enlighten | to help someone understand something |
| 16. setback | a temporary defeat |
| 17. decisive | having the power to decide something |
| 18. impressionable | easily influenced |
| 19. structure | the way something is set up |
| 20. motivation* | the reason why you do something |

*The starred words are the words my students must write meaningful sentences for.

Teacher Meaningful Sentences

1. Ms. Moss's reading students have many **accomplishments** or skills that they have learned this year.
2. Mr. Sauter thinks that this students are in a more **elite** or superior group than Mrs. Dunleavy's students because his students scored better on the history TAAS test.
3. Unfortunately, many students do not have a **mentor**, someone to guide them, to help them make difficult decisions in life.
4. Kenneth didn't understand how to shoot a free throw, so he asked Coach Stewart to **demonstrate** or show him how to do it.

5. Many students have very poor **motivation** for doing their homework. Ms. Moss feels she must give them a reason for doing it, so she gives them a candy bar if they do their homework every night for two weeks.

Section One (pp. 185-87)

Treasure Hunt

1. How does Steven become involved in taekwondo?
2. Who are the two people that Steven most credits for his success in his sport? How did these people help him?
3. What do other countries think of the United States, according to Steven?
4. How does Steven describe the United States?
5. What are Steven's plans for life after the Olympics?

Discussion Questions

1. How does Steven become involved in taekwondo?
2. Who are the two people that Steven most credits with for success in his sport? How did these people help him?
3. What do other countries think of the United States, according to Steven?
4. How does Steven describe the United States?
5. What are Steven's plans for life after the Olympics?
6. Why does Steven feel that you must enjoy what you choose to do in life?
7. What type of person is Steven? Give examples from the story to support your answer.
8. If you could ask Steven any question, what would you ask and why?
9. Would you like to be like Steven Lopez? Why or why not?
10. Describe the characteristics that Steven has that make him successful.

Section Two (pp. 187-89)

Treasure Hunt

1. What does Steven do so that he will continue to be the best at his sport?
2. What does Steven say you should do in order to reach the top of something?
3. What are some of the reasons that Steven likes traveling?
4. What are the two choices we have when we lose at something, according to Steven?
5. Why does Steven feel that sports are important for kids today?

Discussion Questions

1. What does Steven do so that he will continue to be the best at his sport?
2. What does Steven say you should do in order to reach the top of something?
3. What are some of the reasons that Steven likes traveling?

4. What are the two choices we have when we lose at something, according to Steven?
5. Why does Steven feel that sports are important for kids today?
6. Why do you think Steven likes to be around people who challenge him to be the best he can be?
7. What is perhaps the one characteristic that makes a person a winner, according to Steven?
8. What board game does Steven compare his sport to? Why do you believe he makes this comparison? What do the two have in common?
9. What kind of role model does Steven feel he needs to be? How do you know?
10. What characteristics does Steven believe sports develop? Why are these important to learn?

Adventures in Writing

Remember you need to choose one of these to write on. DO NOT write on all four.

1. Describe what you think a typical day for Steven would be like. Start at about 5 a.m. and work until 11:00 p.m. and include at least one event for every hour.
2. Steven describes all of the different steps he takes to become a better athlete. Identify four of these steps and describe how they can help make you better at accomplishing your goals.
3. Steven explains that a winner is someone who is able to suffer defeat and learn from that experience. How have you done this same thing so that you were able to come out a winner instead of a loser?
4. Steven describes how playing sports has helped him prepare for his life after sports. How has playing sports helped you prepare for life after them?

Story Retell

1. How does Steven become involved in taekwondo?
2. Who are the two people that Steven most credits with his success in his sport? How did these people help him?
3. Why does Steven feel that sports are important for kids today?
4. Why do you think Steven likes to be around people who challenge him to be the best he can be?
5. What is perhaps the one characteristic that makes a person a winner according to Steven?

Story Test

Write the answers to these questions on your own paper. You may use any notes that you have including your treasure hunts. Answer in complete sentences and be sure to give evidence to support your answers.

1. How does Steven become involved in taekwondo?
2. Who are the two people that Steven most credits with his success in his sport? How did these people help him?
3. Why does Steven feel that you must enjoy what you choose to do in life?
4. What type of person is Steven? Give examples from the story to support your answer.
5. Describe the characteristics that Steven has that make him successful.
6. What does Steven do so that he will continue to be the best at his sport?
7. What does Steven say you should do in order to reach the top of something?
8. What are the two choices we have when we lose at something, according to Steven?
9. Why does Steven feel that sports are important for kids today?
10. Why do you think Steven likes to be around people who challenge him to be the best he can be?

Final Project

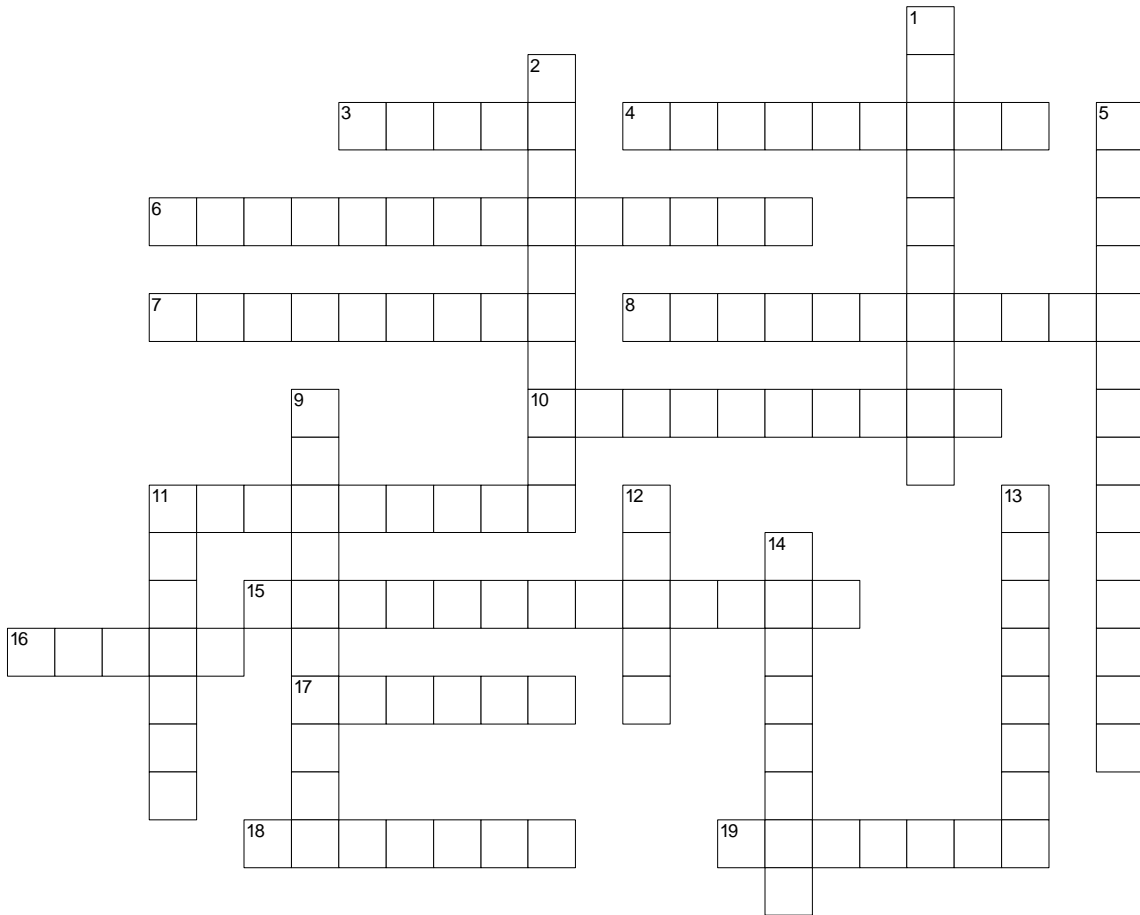
You will be responsible for choosing another Olympic athlete to read about. Once you have read the story, you will be making a poster representing that athlete's life. Your poster will need to include the following:

- the name of the athlete
- information about the sport that athlete participates in (one paragraph)
- where the athlete lives and/or trains
- five awards the athlete has received
- description of how the person became successful using the definition and characteristics we went over in class (one paragraph)
- a picture of the athlete (If you cannot find a picture, you should draw one yourself.)
- a time line including at least five events from the athlete's life
- what you like about this person (one paragraph)
- what you dislike about this person (one paragraph)
- what you learned about yourself through this person (one paragraph)

Each of these criteria is worth 10 points for a total of 100. Not doing one of these things will result in your losing those points. How detailed your paragraphs are and how your poster looks will determine how many of the ten points you will receive under each category.

Enrichment Activity One

Crossword Puzzle



Constructed using Crossword Weaver

ACROSS

- 3 a peninsula in Asia, west of Japan occupied by North Korea and South Korea
- 4 to help someone understand something
- 6 an acquired excellence or skill
- 7 a Korean martial art resembling karate
- 8 to show publicly
- 10 a country's representative to another country
- 11 the way something is set up
- 15 a group having people from at least two countries
- 16 a pursuit or interest engaged in for relaxation
- 17 a counselor or guide
- 18 to decrease in size
- 19 tiredness

DOWN

- 1 the reason why you do something
- 2 enthusiastic
- 5 easily influenced
- 9 a championship series of games or athletic contests
- 11 a temporary defeat
- 12 a superior group
- 13 having the power to decide something
- 14 a group made up of people from one country

Enrichment Activity Two

Consult the Internet or the encyclopedias in class and write down twenty facts about taekwondo.

CONCLUSION

It is important for my students to become successful in their lives. Before they can become successful, they need to realize what this word means. After they understand the definition, they need to understand the characteristics that make someone successful. They then need to see examples of people who have these characteristics. I believe that studying Olympic sports stars will help my students accomplish all of these goals because they will see people who are very successful. They have set high goals for themselves, and they have worked hard to accomplish them. I also believe the structure of SFA will benefit them greatly because they will develop vocabulary and practice other skills that make good readers like prereading, making predictions, and talking about what they are reading. When students develop good reading skills, their ability to read increasingly difficult texts will rise. They will experience success in reading and perhaps develop a great love for reading that will grow as they get older and are exposed to more and more types of texts.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Teacher Resources

Covey, Stephen. *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. New York: Simon & Schuster Trade, 1990.

This book is an excellent tool for defining success and the characteristics a person must have to accomplish goals. This book will provide the framework by which my students will study the definition of success and apply the definition to Olympic athletes.

Gordeeva, Ekaterina. *My Sergei: A Love Story*. New York: Warner Books, 1996.

This book is primarily the love story of two Russian figure skaters who won the Olympics in 1988 and 1994. However, it also chronicles the triumphs and challenges the pair faced on both quests for Olympic gold. Reading this book will help teachers identify characteristics of successful people that can be used to help students fine tune their definition of this word.

Guttman, Allen. *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.

This is the best introductory study of the history and significance of sports. It provides an invaluable context for the study of any specific sports topic.

Student Resources

Schaller, Bob. *The Olympic Dream and Spirit*. Vols. 1-3. Grand Island, Nebr: ExHusker Press, 2000.

This book is a compilation of several biographies of famous Olympians. Some of the athletes profiled include Bela Karolyi, Mary Lou Retton, Laura Wilkinson, and Steven Lopez. The average length of an autobiography is four pages. This book is an excellent resource for studying Olympic athletes past and present. One possible drawback is that some of the autobiographies are written at a high level; however, teacher supports can overcome this problem. Autobiographies in the second volume include Dominique Moceanu, Mark Reynolds, Tammie Spatz-Stone, and Mary Lee Tracy. Autobiographies in the third volume include Andre Agassi, Joe Jacobi, Felicia Zimmermann, Cory Salmela, and Lyle Nelson.

Internet Resources

www.edgate.com/summergames/inactive/olympic_facts/index.html

Olympic Games

This is a very useful site on the Olympic games. The site covers such diverse topics as the origins of the games and famous athletes of the modern games. It is a great place to go for quick information on anything having to do with the Olympics.

www.usa-gymnastics.org

USA Gymnastics

This is a great place to go if one has any questions about gymnastics. The site contains a great history of the triumphs of American Olympic teams, the individual events that make up the sport, and where gymnastics events are taking place throughout the country.